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SUBJECT: EUFOR COMMANDER OPTIMISTIC ABOUT DRC ELECTORAL
PROCESS

REF: A. KINSHASA 998

[1](#)B. LIBREVILLE 489

[1](#)1. SUMMARY. European Union Force Commander in the DRC General Viereck told a Pretoria think tank audience that he was "optimistic" that the second round of the DRC elections would proceed smoothly. Viereck emphasized that EUFOR's mandate is limited to supporting MONUC, and the mission will end on November 30. The fighting between Bemba's and Kabila's forces August 20-22 has, paradoxically, created a more stable environment since the two sides are now communicating more openly. However, Viereck expressed concern about the recent flow of weapons into Kinshasa and urged greater transparency in the movement of arms. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. Operations Commander for the European Force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (EUFOR R.D.Congo) General Karl-Heinz Viereck briefed approximately 50 South African officials, think tank analysts and diplomats at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in Pretoria August 13. Viereck, a German national, also met with South African Great Lakes Envoy Kingsley Mamabolo, senior SANDF military officials, and the South African Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), which is providing ballots for the second round of the elections.

[1](#)3. Viereck provided a general overview of the EUFOR structure, which includes a strategic headquarters in Potsdam, a force headquarters in Kinshasa, 2000 troops from 22 EU countries (800 troops in Kinshasa and 1200 in Gabon), and a strategic reserve in Europe. In Viereck's view, the integrated EU operation has worked very well, despite the very short time to stand up the mission. The EU mission to the DRC signaled European support for Africa and its peace and security agenda.

Limited Mandate

[1](#)4. Viereck stressed that EUFOR's mandate in the DRC is limited to supporting MONUC. Specifically, EUFOR will aid the electoral process, help secure the elections, rescue and recover people in distress, secure the airport, and share intelligence with MONUC. The mandate is not, he emphasized, to rescue Europeans from the DRC if trouble breaks out. The

duration of the mission is limited to four months; it began July 29 and will conclude on November 30.

15. Asked why EUFOR planned to end its mission at such a sensitive moment -- just as the second round of elections will likely be announced -- Viereck said he expected the announcement of results in early November, well before EUFOR's departure date. He also noted that MONUC will remain after November 30, and that the EU would continue with its police cooperation and security sector reform programs.

Incidents of August 20-22

16. The incidents of August 20-22, when the presidential guard clashed with MDC leader Bemba's militia, served as a "wake-up call," Viereck said. EUFOR expected violence, but was caught off guard by the timing and particular location in the city. Asked what triggered the violence, Viereck only said that "someone" felt the need to show force on the streets and the other side felt the need to respond. From a military point of view, the events were a "contained, localized" dispute, and the response, led by local police with MONUC and EUFOR in support, went exactly as planned. Viereck said that EUFOR's visible neutrality during the tensions has improved its image with the population in Kinshasa.

17. Viereck said that the current military confidence-building measures between Kabila's and Bemba's forces, supported by MONUC and EUFOR, are working "very well." EUFOR and MONUC now have much closer communication with Bemba's forces in particular. Asked about how much control Bemba has over his

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forces, Viereck admitted that he could not say for certain. He also noted that the key to stability is visible political cooperation between the two presidential candidates, not merely military coordination.

Arms Flows

18. Viereck also expressed concern about recent flows of weapons into Kinshasa, particularly the T-55 tanks. Even though the government technically ordered the tanks some time ago, Viereck said that the timing of their delivery and lack of transparency has increased tensions and fed rumors. He noted that tanks are not a real military factor in Kinshasa, but rather are a "show of force."

Optimistic

19. Concluding his remarks, Viereck said he was "optimistic" that the second round of elections would go smoothly. The incidents of August 20-22 forced MONUC and EUFOR to work more closely with the parties, particularly Bemba's militia. He believes the confidence-building measures are working. However, international pressure on the two presidential candidates -- such as the recent visits of President Mbeki and EU High Representative Solana -- remains critically important in the period leading up to the elections.
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